THE OPEN GATE TO PRAYER

MABEL N. THURSTON

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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THE OPEN GATE TO PRAYER

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By
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Author of "On the Road to Arcady," etc.

Introduction by
HELEN B. MONTGOMERY

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THE GATE OF PRAYER

"The morning is the gate of day
But ere you enter there,
See that you set to guard it well
The sentinel of prayer.

"So shall God's grace your steps attend,
But nothing else pass through
Save what can give the countersign;
The Father's will for you.

"When you have reached the end of day
Where night and sleep await,
Set there the sentinel again,
To guard the evening gate.

"So shall no fear disturb your nest,
No danger and no care;
For only peace and pardon pass
The watchful guard of prayer."

—ANON.

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Introduction

I AM glad of the opportunity of looking over Miss Thurston's manuscript, *The Open Gate to Prayer.* The title itself is a good one. Prayer is indeed like the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It lets us in to so many glorious experiences, and lets us out to such a wealth of ministry.

I like the book; it seems to me another evidence of the revival of interest in the subject of prayer which is becoming increasingly plain in many countries. When I was writing *Prayer and Missions,* I made out a book list at the close of each chapter. No sooner was the book in press than I discovered a dozen titles that I would have been so glad to add to those selected, had they been in print.

Not only in books is this interest evident, but in the number of articles that are appearing in our current magazines. Some of them, to be sure, show a woeful ignorance of the power of true prayer on the part of their writers, but many of them are helpful and stimulating.

Our greatest need, however, is not to read more books about prayer, or listen to more arguments

about prayer, but to begin to practice the fine art of prayer—an art that is at once the highest and most difficult. If we are to become masters in the art of prayer, we need to be taught to pray and trained to pray, and I believe that this book is welcome for the reason that it actually does show people the way of prayer, and trains them in it. I think that the section on *The Will* is particularly valuable. Few people rest themselves on the great will and purpose of God in His world, and fewer still appreciate that there is no realization possible to any of us except as our little lives enter into the stream of His almighty will.

The questionnaire at the close of each section is helpful and stimulating. The use of these questionnaires will adapt the book for the purpose of classroom work, either in the mission study class or in the organized Bible class. I cannot think of anything more helpful than to follow the Lord's Prayer through, clause by clause, in a series of lessons in the Sunday-school. Such study is certain to lead to better and more true prayer.

HELEN B. MONTGOMERY.

Rochester, N. Y.

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"Prayer is bringing God and the soul together, and leaving them alone."

—Bishop Fiske.

I

THE UNUSED POWER

"Men ought always to pray and not to faint."
—Luke 18:1.

A YEAR or two after the close of the Great War, one of the leading English scientists was making an address in the City Temple, London. He was speaking of the terrible and, as yet, almost unknown force which scientists call atomic energy.

"We should be deeply thankful that Germany did not know how to use this energy in 1914," he said. *"And God forbid that any nation should ever know how to use it till that nation is morally fit to use it."*

Atomic energy is, as yet, but a name to most of us. Whether, in the course of time, it will become another servant of mankind, like electricity, or whether its secrets will have to be guarded like those of certain deadly gases, it is far too early to conjecture.

But there is, within the reach of every one of us, another power, infinitely greater than atomic energy; a power working only for good—never for

evil; a power which, if rightly understood and used, will unfailingly command success for any life or any nation. Atomic energy may, in future generations, change the whole course of civilization, but atomic energy never will be able to command the things of the spirit. It can have no power over courage and honor and truth and justice and love. It may release unused powers of matter, but it never will be able to release unused powers of the human spirit. It never will be able to restore the diseased tissues of the soul, to fill the empty places of the life with eager purpose, to give one the freedom of eternity. Great as it is—and we do not yet know how great—it is a thing of matter and time, not of the spirit and eternity.

There are, perhaps, few ideals more deeply cherished by true citizens of our country than those embodied in its Constitution, which give every man the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But there is only one power known to man that can teach him how to win his rights—how to walk free from fear, how to achieve a life over which death will have no more power than a moment's shadow falling across his face; how to enter upon a joyous, enthralling, eternity-long adventure in happiness.

That power is prayer.

How pitiful even the smallest vision of this eternal power makes most of the things that we

call prayer! Psychologists tell us that every wish is a prayer—that all desire is prayer. But desire is only half the prayer. To desire only—to " ask "—is like wiring a house for electricity and then never turning on the current. Moreover, even our asking, such as it is, is most frequently an asking for things—for money, for health, for pleasure, perhaps for help in some tight place. These are the things that most of us really care about—that we ask for with all our heart. The pain to the great heart of God that it should be so! The infinite and eternal loss to our own souls!

Before we try to realize what prayer is, let us put away some of the mistaken ideas about it—let us see what prayer is *not.*

Prayer is not getting something by the magic formula—" In Jesus' Name, Amen."

Prayer is not persuading God to change His mind. The infinite heart of the Father is always planning the best for His children—things more wonderful than anything of which those children could possibly dream. All the prayer in the world could not make God love us any better than He does or want more beautiful things for us, because His love and His care are already infinite.

And, most certainly, *prayer is not breaking any law.* God's laws cannot be broken.

What, then, is prayer, more than the asking? *What is it?* Perhaps there is no better definition

than that given by the old Scotswoman in one of George Macdonald's books—"Prayer is just keeping the gate open!" It is keeping the whole life open to an infinitely-loving and all-powerful Father.

In the heart of the city are the great power-houses that supply the city with electrical power. Does every citizen have an equal amount of it? Far from it. Some people have no connection with the power at all—their houses are not even wired. The power is all about them—it lights the streets through which they walk—it carries them from place to place, but they have not let it into their own homes. Some people get along with the smallest possible amount of it—they are keeping the bills down! Some people use the power for many things—for heat as well as light; for sewing and cooking and washing and ironing and cleaning. And some people use it to carry out great enterprises that benefit thousands of people. *There is no difference in the power.* The difference is in the *amount* of power that people use.

The greatest power in all the universe is the power of prayer. The most important thing in the world for you and for me is to know how to use that power. The trouble with most of our lives—the reason that they are so gray and unsatisfying and lacking in power—is that we do not understand and use the laws of prayer.

The great electric inventions were not discovered by chance. They were worked out by men who studied long and patiently to discover and apply the certain laws. Nobody could have advanced a step either by ignoring those laws or trying to work without them. The great spiritual forces have their laws as exactly and inevitably as the great physical forces; no achievements can be won except by working with those laws. It is only through those laws that we come to know God. Without Him our lives are like the desert before it is irrigated—dry and bare, producing nothing of any value. But when the irrigating canals are opened, when the water comes flashing down from some deep, mountain-lake and threads the hard and barren plains the whole desert is transformed into a place of fruitfulness and beauty. *But the channels must be kept open.*

Questionnaire

1. What are some of the current conceptions that pass for prayer? The Pharisee (Luke 18: 10-14) and the street corner petitioner (Matt. 6: 5) seem strangely foreign figures to us in America. But what was the spiritual attitude of each? Have they any parallels in modern life? What is your own definition of true prayer?

2. Compare Ps. 145: 18, Matt. 6: 9 and Heb. 11: 6. What is meant by praying in truth? If we really cannot think of God as a Father, what shall we do about it? Note that the writer to the Hebrews begins

with a lesser conception—one must believe that there is a God and that He will deal with men as fairly as good business men deal with their employees. If we begin with that, will it be right to *stay* there? How can we deepen our conception of God? Note Col. 4:2. Has thanksgiving anything to do with the answer?

3. What is the meaning of Luke 18:1? Does it mean that we must be continually asking God for things? Or talking to Him in all our leisure time? If not, what does it mean? What about John 9:31? Is it possible for the lips to pray if the life does not? How can we learn to be *eager* over prayer?

4. What effect should prayer, if it is honest and persevering, have upon the life? What life in the Bible, aside from that of Jesus, seems to you to reveal most clearly the power of prayer?

II

HINDRANCES

THE two great hindrances to prayer are both matters of the will, and therefore within our control. Infinite love is always pressing upon our souls as the atmosphere presses upon our bodies. Continuously, in countless ways, the Father gives to His children. Yet although the world is flooded with sunlight, it is possible for us to keep doors and windows closed and live in twilight gloom. But it is *not* possible for us to keep well in that gloom. It has been discovered that blind children need the sunlight, and sicken without it, no less than those who can see. Life and light cannot be separated.

So, although the Father is always at the door of the soul with all His infinite love, and wisdom and power for His child's need, *the child must see that the door is kept open.* There is no safety-catch for the soul's door. A thousand gusts blow upon it—a thousand small secret pressures push it to. And a thousand, thousand busy concerns keep the child engaged that he may not open it or even notice that it has softly closed and that the light of his house has grown dim: that dust and leaves and floating

sticks have filled his channel, that his garden is dying of thirst.

So the supreme concern of the child is not that he may pray in faith. In both prayer and life, faith comes through faithfulness. *The supreme concern is to give time to the Father every day and let nothing—business nor pleasure nor weariness—rob Him of that time.*

There is no intellectual difficulty here. If one believe at all in a Father Who is supreme love and power and wisdom, the argument is incontrovertible. The most important thing a life ever can have to do is to keep a vital contact with that love and power and wisdom. One must keep the time for prayer *whether he feel like it or not.* Many a frail child does not " feel like " eating, but the physician knows that that child especially needs regular and nourishing food. No one ever achieved success in any art, or science, or business without working many a day when he did not " feel like it." But not for that did he stop working. Too well he knew that that would be fatal.

" But," someone asks, " is it really prayer if we do not want to pray? "

That depends. If you are merely repeating words, it is not prayer, certainly. But if you honestly tell your Father how hard it is to pray—that you cannot feel His presence—that it all seems like talking against a blank wall—*that* is prayer! And

always there are sins for which to ask forgiveness, joys for which to thank Him, something to ask for some other of His children. Keep the time as you would keep an engagement with teacher or physician or business-head. We never think of cancelling business engagements because we do not "feel like" dealing with the problems they involve. Rather, we know that the only way to conquer our inertia is to give ourselves, heart and soul, to the matter in hand.

But the appointment with the Father is far more than a business engagement. It is—or will be, if the child do his part—a constantly deepening friendship—the supreme friendship and therefore the supreme experience possible to humanity. The realization of this may not, and probably will not, come at first. It takes time for even human friendships to grow. But sooner or later, according to the earnestness and faithfulness of the child, that consciousness will come. And then there will be, not merely the morning or evening engagement, but the eager, conscious communion of friend with Friend—duty flowering into life's supreme joy.

And if this first condition of prayer—the keeping of time for God each day—is a matter of the will, so, no less, is the second requisite. There can be no success in prayer, no joyous companionship with the Great Companion if we are holding fast to any known sin or refusing at any point to sur-

render to that will which is love. Until that sin is put away or that holding, no matter how small, surrendered, the Power cannot get through into the life. The only valid prayer, then, is to tell the Father honestly that you are not willing—to pray to be made willing or, if you cannot honestly pray that, to be made willing to *be* made willing! If there is even so tiny a seed of willingness and the prayer-time is kept, little by little the love will conquer and the child realize that what his heart was wanting all the time was just—his Father!

The old Scotswoman's homely definition makes clear St. Paul's command—to pray without ceasing. Were prayer a matter of words, St. Paul would be commanding an impossibility. We all have work and duties and human contacts that demand hours of each day. But, by meeting the Father early in the day, by putting away the things He does not want us to do, and doing faithfully the tasks given us, we can keep the channel open and all the busy day love will guard and guide us.

These two conditions are fundamental. There can be no real prayer until they are met. But when the door *is* open—then there can be no rules —no formulæ that one may give another. There are no rules for the meeting of friend with friend! The Father has His own way of making His presence felt by each of His children; the Great Com-

panion has His own gifts and revelations. The Adventure of Prayer has become a part of the supreme and eternal Adventure of Love!

Questionnaire

1. What are some other hindrances to prayer beside those named here? Is there any other that seems to you more dangerous than these two? Are the dangers in regard to prayer the same as those in regard to receiving the word (Matt. 13:3-8 and 18-23)?

2. The promises in Matt. 7:7-8 seem unconditional: are they really so? What is implied in the word "seek"? Has John 7:17 any relation to prayer? Is prayer in reality a matter of emotion or of will? Is it true prayer if it is a matter of emotion only? May it be true prayer if it is a matter of the will alone? What do you think of the prayer of the centurion in Mark 9:24?

3. Is it necessary to real success in life to keep definite time for prayer? How can one fulfil Paul's command to pray without ceasing? What needs to be put away in your own life in order to keep the channel open?

III

THE FATHER

"*Have we not all one Father?*"—MAL. 2:10.

NE day Jesus' disciples came to Him with a strange request. It was, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Teach them to *pray?* Why, all their lives they had known how to pray. It was one of the first things taught a child in the Jewish home. Every Jew knew how to pray. Moreover, this little group of men was especially eager over the realities of life. They were the very finest in Israel—the men to whom the greatest task in history was to be entrusted. Yet these men, watching their Master day by day, seeing His utter fearlessness among His enemies, His instant command of every situation, His unfailing understanding and mastery of the enigma that we call life, His unbroken consciousness of God—seeing these things and realizing where the secret lay, came to Him at last with their great request, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*"

So He taught them. Not a form. He had warned them against a mere saying of words. Not

a form, but the great principles and laws of prayer. The things which must be grasped by heart and soul—the things to which the life must be adjusted before the power can come. And the first thing—the one supreme fact upon which everything in the universe depends, is that God is a *Father*.

The old prophets had realized great truths about God—truths that need terribly to be reaffirmed in our lives today. They had realized His holiness, His omniscience, His sovereignty, His might. Once in a while, the tenderest of them had caught a fleeting glimpse of His fatherhood, but only a fleeting glimpse, flashing upon the hearts, and then lost again in the Jehovah of holiness and might. But it is just upon this tremendous and marvellous fact that Jesus bases all the good news that He brings to torn and doubting humanity. That *is* the good news—just that; that the God Who is love is a Father—that He understands us as the wisest and tenderest of fathers understand their children—that His children are His supreme care in all the universe—that He cares when they are sick or unhappy—that He knows all their needs, even the smallest—that He has planned for their education, for their happiness—that He is more eager to have them make a success of life than they are themselves—that He rejoices to see them grow in the same way, only infinitely more,

than a great earthly father rejoices to see his children develop into brave and strong men and women, making honorable places for themselves in life—that if they fail, He suffers terribly, but His love never changes by a shadow—that He is always planning to help them to new victories and achievements—that He delights in surprising them with fresh gifts—that above all He is eager to have His children love Him and want Him to share their daily lives—eager to have them interested in His work as He is in theirs. That is God, as Jesus revealed Him to us.

No one can read the story of the Gospels without realizing how Jesus went up and down the city streets and country roads searching for one thing—faith. Sometimes He found it—more often He did not. Again and again His own disciples hurt Him by their lack of it. What did He mean? Faith, that He could heal diseases and cast out demons and save His friends from drowning? No; something far greater than any of these things. Faith that God was their *Father*—that they could "bank" upon Him utterly; that though everything else in the universe failed, He would never fail the child that depended upon Him or would accept His help.

This vital consciousness of the Fatherhood of God is the basic condition of all real prayer.

"Yes," someone says, "*but how can I get that*

consciousness? I want it more than anything else in the world—or, I think that I do. I pray for it again and again. But no answer comes. God seems so infinitely far away, lost in the immensity of His own creation. I would give anything to feel that He really cared about the little everyday problems, joys, sorrows of my life, but I just cannot. How can I make myself realize Him? "

How? Exactly as one masters any art in life—by constant practice. Edison made seven thousand experiments before he perfected the phonograph. A popular writer had seven hundred articles rejected before he had a single one accepted. Scientists spend a lifetime working for the discovery of an infinitesimal bit of truth. And do we dare to think that we can discover to our own lives the God of all the universe by careless or intermittent or half-indifferent cries to Him to reveal Himself?

How can we learn to realize His Fatherhood? Exactly as anyone learns anything else of value in life—by constant and faithful practice—day by day taking definite time to think about Him. By recalling again and again how He has guided us through some difficulty or to some achievement; by remembering all the friends and joys He has sent us; by thinking about His plan for humanity. We never find it difficult to think about the friends we love best; we are always thinking about them, holding imaginary conversations with them, writ-

ing them letters in our thoughts, although our pens cannot find time for them. We run to them, first, in our joy or our sorrow; we go to them to discuss our problems or opportunities; we plan for times together—why, our friends are interwoven with the very tissue of our lives!

Practice treating God like that! Make appointments with Him. Talk over your joys and sorrows and fears, your problems and perplexities with Him. Go and walk with Him. Listen to Him. Treat Him as your Father and He will reveal Himself as that Father, only infinitely more loving and tender and *sure* than our hearts had dreamed. When we love God so that we want to be with Him as we want to be with the dear ones of our own families, the prayer-channel is open, and no man can say what things may be wrought through it.

Questionnaire

1. By what names was God known to the Old Testament writers? Did Jesus use any of these names? What change in the conception of God is revealed by His name for Him—Father?

2. Make a list of the things included in the idea of fatherhood. Have we a right to expect all these things from God? Study in this connection, Prov. 3:6; Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 12:29-31; Phil. 4:19.

3. Would the recognition of God as our Father, if really grasped and worked out in the life, ever affect

the great human problems of business and industry and war? Do you know any instance where an individual has carried the consciousness of the Fatherhood of God into his business life? What changes would it make in your life if you achieved such consciousness?

4. What is the difference between having faith that a certain prayer will be granted and having faith in *God Himself?* Is the difference a vital one?

5. Think out your own method for learning to realize the Fatherhood of God.

IV

OUR FATHER

"Our Father which art in heaven."—LUKE 11:2.

THE basal fact in prayer is that God is our Father. The first condition of successful prayer is the recognition of this fact—God is our *Father*. The second condition is the realizing of the fact that God is *our* Father. He is not just my Father and the Father of my family and friends and (some of) my neighbors. He is not the Father of those alone who are of my denomination or country or race. His Fatherhood is not even confined to those who are seeking righteousness in every race. He is *our* Father—everybody's; the pronoun of unlimited humanity, as wide as the world. There are times when my sin seems to fill the world—times of sharp temptation—of great danger, of sudden agonizing need—when I may cry to *my* Father. When Peter was sinking his need was so instant that, for the moment, he could think of nothing but that. Many a sick or crippled man cried to Jesus for his own healing—and received it. He refused no one who came to Him with anything in

body or soul that needed mending. But the fact that the sick had that one prayer "answered," did not necessarily make their lives strong and joyous and full of power, as God wants the lives of His children to be.

"Go and sin no more," Jesus warned one whom He healed. He saw that that life was in great danger of falling away from its momentary contact with God's power. There is no hope for a life except in permanent contact.

Prayer is the keeping of the life open—and that means, to *God*—not the opening to certain acts or qualities that we like and the shutting out of others that we do not like! God cannot be divided. We cannot make any terms with Him except on *His* terms. *We cannot let God in and shut His other children out.* When He comes, He comes loving *all* His children, and until we learn to say, not *my Father,* but *our* Father—until we learn to mean the words in our hearts, we are not "tuned in" to God. He loves all His children and we love only a chosen few. He wants certain things for all of them and we don't care whether most of them have those things or not. So until we do care, our lives are not open to His power. It is as if we were dwelling in houses with only one small window open to the sunshine when the whole house should be full of it—one tiny wire furnishing us with light

when the whole house should be wired and light in every corner of it.

But how can we learn *really* to pray *Our* Father? We cannot carry all the world of human needs and temptations and anguish in our hearts. Only Divinity can do that.

No, we cannot do that. No human being could carry such a burden for a moment. And yet we can put our hearts against the hearts of others who are in the same kind of need as ourselves. Is it loneliness? A recent writer who came to America as an immigrant has written a brilliant and poignant book called *Children of Loneliness*. But we are all children of loneliness until we find our Father and our brothers. The world is tragically full of lonely people. They are all around us—on our streets—in our offices—in our homes. So we can pray " Father, send me friends—send me one who needs me. And oh, not to me alone! Send to all others who are as lonely as I. Open my eyes that I may recognize them around me. Open my heart so that I may help—"

Is it daily bread—the fear catching at the heart as the days go by and there is still no work? We can pray, " Father, You know how frightened I am. And yet Your Son has told us to ask You for daily bread. He would not mock us—He who could not bear to see people hungry even for a day! Give me courage till the work comes. Keep

my mind alert that I may be quick to recognize the opportunity when You send it. Let me take it all as a great venture in faith. And, oh Father, help me to help other frightened, discouraged people who are out of work. Many of them do not know You—do not know that You are eager to help. Open my eyes that I may see them and help them to know You."

Pray and then look for your brother who is suffering. That is the way to pray Our Father. To cry "Father" may be only selfishness, but "*Our* Father" honestly prayed makes one a citizen of the world and of eternity. These two words cried out of a glowing heart will banish loneliness forever. The soul conscious of a Father Who is love and of a brother who needs not only the Father's love but the child's, is now fully connected for power. Father and brother are the aerial and the ground wire of his soul's radio. If either is disconnected no voice comes, but with the two adjusted, what messages come singing to the soul! The two words sweep the whole circle of God's love and man's need, now and forever!

Questionnaire

1. Why is it not possible to be "filled with all the fulness of God" until we begin to love our brother? Why isn't it wise to develop one's self before trying to help others, even by our prayer?

2. Think over your own prayers. How much are you remembering others when you pray? A woman once remarked, "I never allow myself to think of the poor; it makes me too miserable." Would she not make her family and friends unhappy if she herself were "miserable?" Where is the flaw in the argument?

3. Is there any particular class or race of people especially repellent to you? Can you pray "Our Father" and exclude them from your prayer? Doubtless others will include them; and no human thought can hold millions of individuals. How do you solve this problem?

4. How can you learn to love people for whom you do not care? Does praying "Our Father" commit you to anything in the way of action?

5. Are there ever times when one can pray for oneself alone? If so, when?

6. Study, in this connection, Luke 18:10-14; Luke 15:1-7; 1 John 4:20-21; Eph. 3:14-21.

V

THE NAME

"*Hallowed be Thy Name.*"—LUKE 11:2.

UR Father!

There has come to us the beginning of the consciousness of a God Who is a Father—Who is infinitely aware of every need and infinitely eager to supply that need. There has come to us, too, dimly but inescapably, the consciousness of His other children whose needs are just the same as ours—who, like us, are lonely and tempted and unsatisfied and beset by a thousand doubts and problems. All this is in our hearts and minds as we lift our thoughts to God.

Now, what shall we pray for, first? Which of all the terrible clamorous needs of humanity—the terrible clamorous needs of our own lives—shall we put first?

Jesus Christ's answer is startling. It is the last thing that most people think of today—so far the last that often our thoughts do not touch it at all. *The first thing you need to pray for, for your lives and others, is reverence—"Hallowed be Thy Name!"*

If we have followed Jesus' teachings anywhere, we know that He is not limiting the petition to guarding against profanity. This is no mere echo of the third commandment. The "Name" of God means—God! We are to pray that we may reverence *all that God is.*

"Oh, we know that God is infinite," we cry, "infinite in wisdom, power, love, holiness. But, surely, there are things that we need to pray for first! How can people who are starving for bread feel any reverence till they are fed? There are those dependent upon us—we have to provide food for them. We need to be well to work—doesn't that come first? Isn't our first duty to care for those whom God has given us to care for?"

Yes. But our first duty is to care for the immortal part of them supremely. The Christ Who tells us this, knew what it was to be hungry as no one in all the world, with its constant millions of hungry people ever has known it. Yet, even though He was starving, He still cried to the tempting Evil One, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

When shall we ever understand these tremendous words? When shall we understand that they are no arbitrary edict, but the Law, written in our souls? For thousands of years men and nations alike have tried to live by bread alone. Parties,

political and economic, have declared that what people needed was *bread*—sufficient food and shelter and clothing and education and recreation. Give people these things and crime will cease and the Golden Age will come.

It is true that no nation or party ever has achieved this ideal. But if it had, the end would have been the same. We can read it in the tragedies in lives all around us who have had all these things and with them only emptiness of life.

"Where there is no vision," the Bible declares in one of its profound revelations of the law of the human spirit, "the people perish." Or, as another translation has it, "the people cast off restraint." It makes no difference which version we read—the end is the same. To cast off the restraint of great visions and ideals is utterly to perish.

Yes, lives perish without vision. *But there can be no true vision of any part of life until we have a true vision of God.* He is love beyond the utmost comprehension of man, but He is also the power that rules the universe and a burning holiness. We may go to Him with absolute confidence in His love, but we may not go to Him lightly or carelessly. The old commandment forbade the taking of God's Name in vain. So strictly did the Hebrew interpret it that he never took the great Name upon his lips at all. But the Son of God, piercing as He always did to the great laws of the spirit, is

declaring the universal need of something far deeper than purity of lips, great though that is. He is saying that the first need of all life everywhere is a constantly-growing consciousness of the infinite glory of God—such consciousness of His power as shall fill our souls with wonder and awe—such consciousness of His holiness as shall make us understand the awfulness of sin—such consciousness of His love as shall save us from being overwhelmed by our own sin—as shall cleanse us and free us and set us rejoicing to the great task of making His kingdom come upon His earth. This vision, and this alone, will enable us to see life clearly, to correct our perspective, to put first things first, to judge by the standards, not of time, but of eternity. *And nothing else ever can do it.* So, day by day, we must pray this prayer. This vision of the soul is more necessary than is bread for the body.

But how can we do it? How can we learn to hallow the great Name? Exactly as we learn to realize that God is our Father, caring for every doubt and perplexity and heart-break of His children—by *thinking* definitely about Him day after day. The old prophets are full of exultation over the glory of the God of the world they knew, but their universe was but a dooryard compared with the universe that scientists are revealing to us today. Our thought reels at the immensity of the suns and stars about us, and then, when our minds

are wandering dazed, in those incredible distances, they show us the head of a pin and tell us that in that infinitesimal world are thousands of electrons, each with its own sun and satellites, whirling through its unchanging orbit. Man's utmost searching never has found a place so distant that God's silent, majestic law is not at work there, nor a particle so minute that it is not held by the same law. Study God's *work* till all your soul is singing with the wonder of it. That alone will cleanse the life of many small pettinesses—cleanse it and set it walking in great places.

But God is more than Creator. He is infinite holiness. We have not begun to hallow His Name until we have caught our own vision of that holiness. It will be hard to endure. To see the truth about sin and about *our* sin is agony. But we cannot see life truly until we face the truth about sin. And we cannot know the truth about sin except in the burning, searching light of the holiness of God. The soul that once has had that vision will never again go carelessly into the presence of his God. He will be sure—utterly sure—of His love, but he will never forget that holiness. But we have to seek for the revelation—to seek for it with all our hearts—to *want* to hallow His name before the prayer can be answered.

It is not because God needs our worship that this petition is put the first of all. *It is because man*

needs to worship. It is because, until God is given His rightful place in His universe, nothing else can be right. To put God first everywhere in our lives—to recognize Him as God as well as Father, is to open the door of the life and let the mighty power in.

Questionnaire

1. What is meant by hallowing God's Name? Is it a matter of speech merely—an echo of the third commandment?

2. Does reverence mean that we must keep at a distance from God? If not, what does it mean? Has it anything to do with everyday things of life or merely with our prayers?

3. What are the dangers of rushing into things—even into prayer—before we have realized that we are in the presence of God?

4. Study Gen. 12:7; Ex. 3:1-6; Isa. 6:1-8; Jer. 1:1, 4-9; Job 42:1-6; Hab. 3. Note that leaders and prophets did not begin their tasks until they had had a vision of God: that the doubts of Job and Habakkuk ended when they had had a renewed consciousness of the wisdom and power of God. Do such visions come to us today? If not, how *does* the consciousness come to us?

5. What kind of vision is meant in Prov. 29:18? Do you really think that individuals and nations perish when they are without vision? Can there be true vision of any part of life if God be left out?

6. How can we increase our reverence? Has the psychological law stated in Ps. 18:25-26, any bearing upon this?

VI

THE KINGDOM

"*Thy Kingdom come.*"—LUKE 11:2.

AND after the prayer for reverence, what is the next important thing? God's Kingdom. The reverence has to come first. We cannot feel any passion for the coming of the Kingdom until we have learned to reverence the King. We must reverence His holiness before we can understand what kind of a Kingdom His is to be. It is to be a Kingdom of people who love righteousness; who love righteousness so that they count prosperity or ease or comfort as not to be compared with purity and truth and faith and love and all the great achievements of the spirit. They can do without money, but they cannot do without righteousness; they can live without comfort, but they cannot live without faith; they can live without what the world calls success, but they cannot live without loving.

Nothing is more significant than to see how people who are not trying very hard to reach such ideals themselves, yet stake everything upon people who are living them greatly. People—most

people—*want* to believe that such characters exist. Not knowing that their hunger is for God and the Kingdom of God, they give passionate devotion to the man or woman who really lives Him. The man or woman who can make others believe that He really loves them—shares their sorrows, helps them in their problems, rejoices in their joys—what a following he has! A Jewish rabbi died a few years ago—one who had loved greatly—and eight thousand people followed him to his grave. Phillips Brooks died, and all Boston stopped business for five minutes on his burial day, as if he had been a great public servant. He *was*—a great servant of Almighty God. Thousands of men and women, many of them humble and poor and unknown to the world at large, have received such tribute from their fellow-men who were so pathetically eager to believe in the honesty or faith or love of *some* one.

Think how those hungry-hearted men and women would love God if they could see Him! But the only way that they can see Him now, is as you and I reveal Him. To reveal Him in life—anywhere—is to make His Kingdom come in that place.

We think of that Kingdom as concerned with mission boards and councils; perhaps we even think that it should be concerned with congresses and parliaments. But it claims no less, all busi-

ness—factories, shops, farms; all transportation facilities; all courts, schools, printing plants, moving pictures, radios. All these belong, of right, to God. In how many of them do we see His Kingdom triumphant today? And if it is not—if evil is in power instead—whose fault is it? We cry out against the influence of the pictures and books and music of today. Who is going to change that influence? God? Yes, God. No one else. Then why doesn't He do it? There is one answer to that, and only one. *Because we won't let Him.* He can only work—since He will not do things for His children against their wills—through our hands and feet and hearts and minds. He will change things the very moment that we care enough to help Him.

Can you think of Jesus Christ watching our boys and girls go to some of our picture-shows? Do you think that if He were here in the flesh, today, He would let that corruption go on with a sigh and a "Yes, it is terrible, isn't it?" How long do you think it would be before He would make the producer understand that the bad must go and only the good be given?

God's Kingdom come on the mission field? Yes, oh *yes!* But God's Kingdom to come also, exactly as much, in my office, or school-room, or home. When we pray for the coming of that Kingdom, we are not praying for something across

distant seas alone or first. *We are praying that we may live our lives in our homes, in our work, in our recreation, so that God may be seen to be King right there,* whether He is in the next house or not.

That is what it means to pray that God's Kingdom may come—to you and to me!

Questionnaire

1. How large is God's Kingdom—what we know of it?
2. Does it include industry—business—commerce—science—art? If it include all occupations and professions, then there must be some part of it in which each normal soul is interested whether he be a Christian or not. If you are honestly praying this prayer will it make any difference to the way you are working in *your* part of the Kingdom?
3. If a Christian is sincerely praying this prayer has he a right to be *un*interested in any part of the Kingdom?
4. How can you widen your interest?
5. Since mind and time are both finite, how can you decide what parts of the Kingdom-work shall claim your especial time, money, prayers? Do you think that, if you pray this prayer honestly, your opportunities for helping will be increased?
6. How large was God's Kingdom to Joseph—David—Daniel—Paul—Jesus?

VII

THE WILL

"Thy Will be done in heaven, so on earth."
—LUKE 11:2.

THAT God's Kingdom may come—that is the supreme all-inclusive prayer. When God's Kingdom has fully come in, sin will go out, and with sin, all its consequences—war and pestilence and famine—loneliness and discontent and failure—crippled bodies and minds and souls. There will not be a wish or a hope or a longing unsatisfied when God's Kingdom has fully come.

But how can we hasten the coming of that Kingdom for the world that needs it so desperately—for our own lives that need it no less? Jesus tells the method. Over and over He tells it. He tells it here.

Through the doing of God's will. Through the *doing* of God's will. Not merely reverencing it or intellectually assenting to it, but doing it, just exactly as far as we can see and understand it for our own lives; then praying that we may understand more and that our brothers may understand

more; praying that all our lives, minds, wills, emotions, may be used of God in His great work of winning the souls of men. Jesus says very clearly that growth in spiritual understanding comes primarily, not through the intellect, but through the will.

"You don't understand the things I am telling you?" He said once. "I will tell you how you can test them. Don't try to settle them by argument. Set yourself to *living* them—then your doubts will be cleared up. He that *willeth* to do my will—sets all his life to living as I tell him—he it is who will understand more and more of the truth."

There is no other way. We may read about religion all our lives—we might even commit the whole Bible to memory—but unless we try to *live* the things it teaches, we shall walk in doubt to the end of our days. But every bit of earnest living will be like opening a closed window and letting in the light. For Christianity is laboratory work, not a lecture-course; it is life, not theory.

There was a wonderful illustration of this given a few years ago by a woman who had lived to middle-age without religion. She had grown up in a scientific family and married a scientist. Science seemed to her the one dependable fact of life—and religion only superstition.

But when she reached middle-life and, her children gone out into the world, and she found herself

with heart and hands strangely empty after the crowded years, she became ill. She realized that she was upon the verge of a serious breakdown; she could not sleep—she could not control her mind as she always had done. Nobody was able to help her and she realized that if she was to recover she must help herself.

So she studied the situation—which meant not *her* life alone, but life in general. And as she looked around her at the lives she knew, she discovered that there were a few who possessed a quiet, a poise, a happiness that none of the others had. Those few were Christians. They believed in a Father whose love and care never failed them. She did not believe in such a Father, but she decided to test the matter for herself, scientifically. *For one month she would live upon the hypothesis that there was such a God and that He was a Father who cared for her and would help her.* She began that night. When the insomnia came on and the whirl of tormenting thoughts she said to herself, "But I have a Father and He is taking care of me." And she slept better that night than she had for months.

The next day she began again. Scores of times those first days she had to stop herself and deliberately shut off the old thoughts and replace them with the new one of a Father Who cared and Whom she was to obey—for one month! But she

persisted in spite of all discouragements. The result? Long before that month was over she knew that there *was* a God and that He was love. She learned it in the only way that it can be learned—through obedience.

Thy will be done.

"I used to pray that," a woman once said, "with my hands clenched and teeth shut hard, summoning all my resolution to endure the terrible things that God's will would send me. How it must have hurt Him! Why, God's will is the most beautiful thing in all the universe! I know, now, exactly what David meant when he cried, 'How I *love* Thy law!'"

Yes, it must have hurt Him. How would you or I feel if a child we loved never looked at us without terror in its eyes—without shrinking as if it expected to be punished in some way?

The will of God? What is the dearest thing in your life today—the dearest love, the most eager work, the happiest possession? That is a part of God's will for you. Family, friends, work, growth, achievement—all these are part of God's beautiful will for you. All the beauty of the universe, all the powers waiting to be discovered and used, all the infinite possibilities of the human soul—all these are God's will for His children. And we shrink back, afraid of being hurt!

Think of the lives Jesus Christ touched in the

three years of His ministry—of the men and women He set free from leprosy and insanity and sin! Think of Peter and James and John and Matthew. Yes, He called them from their work—Peter and James and John and Andrew from their fishing, Matthew from his tax-collecting, with its opportunities for crooked dealing. What was God's will for these men? Money? No, not for these men, it is true—although it is to be noted that they never lacked. Hardship that they might have escaped if He had let them alone? Yes, that is true, too—but it is only a tiny splinter of the truth!

He gave these men power such as they had never dreamed it possible for men to have, friendships beyond anything that they had ever known, work that was to endure through the ages, courage which made them utterly fearless—which made Peter, the coward, write, "Count it all *joy* when you come into hard places because it means that you are going to get a new experience of God."

God's will is *life*—life with every good thing our hearts ever longed for—love, adventure, courage, power. All our deepest prayers for ourselves, for those we love, for the world, could never begin to touch the wonders that God has planned for His children—that He is eager to give them and will begin to give them, the very moment that our wills are in harmony with His.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. How eagerly, joyously, passionately, we should pray it!

Questionnaire

1. What do you really, as honestly as you can understand yourself, think about God's Will? Do you think that it leads to difficulties we should not otherwise have had? Does God demand sacrifice and self-denial greater than those demanded by life itself, of men and women who do not acknowledge Him? Greater, for instance, than a nation demands of its citizens in time of war? Greater than business or science demands of those who would make a success in those fields? How about our joys—pleasures—friends? Are they a part of His plan for our lives?

2. Think over life as you know it—in your home—in school, college or business—in recreation and pleasure. How do you think these would be changed if God's Will were to be done in, and through them? Think of the tragedies and sorrows of which you personally know. How many of these would have been avoided, had the Will of God been done? Think over the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Amos, Zacharias and Elisabeth, the Disciples, Paul. Was God's Will for them greater, or less, than their own dreams?

3. Does the Will include method as well as end?

4. Suppose that you find it comparatively easy, to let God have His way with your life, *except in one point.* How can you make yourself willing to let Him have His way at that point? Or can you keep back that one thing?

5. If you are really praying that God's Will may be done, what have you to change in your own living?

6. David was a man who sinned greatly; yet the Bible calls him a man after God's own heart. Does his cry, "Oh, how I love Thy law"—Thy will, Thy way of doing things—offer any explanation? Is it possible, in spite of sin, still to love the Will and to return to it?

VIII

DAILY BREAD

"*Give us day by day our daily bread.*"—LUKE 11:2.

AND now we come to bread!

It is said sometimes, that the Lord's Prayer, like the ten commandments, is divided into two parts—God's part and man's; and that the putting of God first is the condition of all success in prayer and in life. But in reality, there is no such division. The whole prayer is a revelation of the Father's love and longing for His children. It is true that He demands reverence first, but why? Because His children can be great only in proportion as they reverence greatness; we never can be greater than our admirations. Until they catch some vision of God, they can have no true vision of themselves or of life.

We are taught to pray that God's Kingdom may come—where? In China? Africa? India? Truly. But, as was emphasized in an earlier chapter, exactly as much in our own homes and work places. Could anything be more wonderful for any one of us than to work in an office where God

is the Head of the firm? To live in a home where He is the Master?

We are told to pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Why? For His glory? Yes, but His supreme glory is to have His children grow into His likeness—to have them love His companionship and eager to share His work. In the first part of the prayer, exactly as much as the last part, Jesus reveals the Father eager to give His children far beyond their thought. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him."

So, because we are so slow to realize it all and because, moreover, for millions of people the great human need for bread is so imperative that they cannot see beyond it, Jesus tells us, separately, to pray for daily bread. Not wealth to store up, but everything that we need for the day's living and the day's joy.

Nobody ever was more tender over hunger than Jesus Christ. *He knew what it was to be starving.* After forty days of intense mental and spiritual struggle, He came back to consciousness, not exhausted as less perfect bodies would have been, but desperately hungry. And He, Who would not lift a finger to feed Himself in ways that His brothers could not do, never forgot that suffering. He would not even let the crowds who followed Him

be hungry for a few hours. He would do for them what He would not do for Himself. One of His especial prayer-parables dealt with the man who needed bread at night. One of the last things that we hear of His doing for His friends was preparing a breakfast for them when they had been out all night fishing, and had caught nothing.

God *suffers* when a single little child goes hungry. He has stored the earth with food. If man would use God's stores as He meant him to, no one would ever be hungry. So He tells us to pray for daily bread, but not for ourselves alone. The prayer means strength to earn the bread; it means no less, wisdom to work out the great problems of physical life so that our brothers may not be hungry.

But there are many kinds of bread. Jesus said that the most important kind in all the world was His Father's word to the soul. The prayer for daily bread means that. It means home and education and friends and work and adventure—all the things that the soul needs to make its life here rich and joyous and eager. The Father wants every one of His children to have these things. Otherwise it would be a mockery to pray for them. The reason that so many millions are missing some, or all of them, is that so few of the Father's children are yet working on the Father's plan—so few of His children really *care*. In Israel's wilderness-history no one ever went hungry unless he refused

to gather his food. That is the way that the Father provides. But now that we have the means—scientific agriculture, machinery, transportation—He has turned that part of His work over to us. It is for us to see that the starving world is fed, body, mind and soul.

So, as the first petitions mean the children's glory no less than the Father's, so the last three are but especial applications of the supreme prayer, "Thy will, not mine, be done."

Questionnaire

1. Do you think that God means everybody to have the necessities of life? Has God provided, in the resources of the earth, enough food for everyone? If so, why are so many people hungry—out of work—in all kinds of need?

2. What would you include in necessities? Have you a right to pray for anything you want—new clothes, books, pleasures, travel? Is there any connection between this prayer and the two preceding?

3. Study the prayers of: Eliezer, Gen. 24:12; Jacob, Gen. 32:9-12; Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:9-18; Hezekiah, Isaiah 38:1-3; the Syrophoenician woman, Mark 7:25-30. For what did they pray and how were the prayers answered? Should you expect the answer to your prayer to come in some miraculous way?

4. Do you think that there is any connection between the supply of bread given us and the use we make of that supply? Can we, for instance, connect this prayer with the parables of the talents and the pounds?

IX

AS WE FORGIVE

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."—MATT. 6:12.

AND after bread—bread for heart and mind and soul and body—is there anything left to ask?

Yes, Jesus Christ says there is a very great thing—forgiveness! Forgive us our debts, our trespasses, our wilful disobedience, our going beyond and falling below God's will, *as we forgive our debtors.*

A tremendous prayer to pray! If we could only stop after the first four words! We cannot honestly pray "Hallowed be Thy Name"—cannot catch even a dim vision of the burning holiness of God without feeling an agony of shame over our own sin. If we could only pray, "For our debts, our transgressions, our ignorance, our mistakes, our inertia, our indifference—for all the sins that, like a smoke-cloud, hide Thy face from us, forgive us, oh Father! Forgive us according to our shame! Forgive us according to Thy love and mercy and tenderness!"

But Jesus does not tell us that we can pray like that. He says, "Pray, 'forgive—as we forgive our debtors.'"

How does God forgive? Utterly. The Bible exhausts language trying to tell of the wonder of God's forgiving love. "I will cast thy sins behind my back"—the one place where we cannot see them. "As far as the east is from the west"—ultimate distance. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." No grudging pardon from our Father—no stiff and cold probation to make us realize how much He has to forgive—nothing but eager, longing love—the Father watching for the prodigal—agonizing—till the boy's heart comes home to the best that the Father has to give.

But Jesus does not tell us that we are to pray for forgiveness like this. *We are to pray for only as much as we are willing to give others.*

It is easy to see why, if we think for a minute. Remember our definition of prayer—that it is not only asking or the desire behind the asking, it is asking and then "keeping the gate open" to God, as the desert lies open to the irrigation canals. But suppose that something stops up the channel. Suppose, with all the power of the power-house waiting, my own particular wire gets grounded. That is what happens when I feel one way about a thing and God feels a different way. Suppose that

I say that I forgive my brother, but in reality I feel about him much as the Elder Brother felt in the parable of the Prodigal Son? I don't want to let him forget too easily how he has wronged me, nor let him have too pleasant a time! Do we want God to " rub in " upon us the consciousness of *our* sins? Do we want Him to keep us as humiliated and under restraint as we want to keep our debtors?

The trouble is that God is feeling one way about that debtor and I am feeling quite another way. God is eager to set him free from the burden—to restore him to usefulness and happiness and self-respect. I, whether consciously or not, want to punish him a while longer. *And until God and I are in harmony, I cannot hear His message or receive His power.*

Let us put it another way. God is love, and just so far as I let Him take possession of my life I shall love. *But love always forgives.* It has no time to think of its own wrongs, it is so eager to see the one it loves clean and whole and useful and joyous. Love always forgives. So if I cannot forgive, it means that I do not yet love—that I have not yet the spirit of my Father in me. Just so far as I am unforgiving, I am unloving, and just so far as I am unloving, I am shutting the Father, Who is love, out of my life. I must go back to the beginning of my prayer again and think of that

Father's holiness until I see how *my* sin—not my brother's—is hurting Him. I must pray that His kingdom may come and His will be done in *me;* I must ask for the day's bread for my soul—enough love to meet the need. And when I really can pray these things, I shall be able to cry, "Oh Father, I do love him! Do Thou forgive my unforgivingness."

Questionnaire

1. Here is the crucial point in many a life. Why? If prayer is keeping the channel open between your soul and God, why is it necessary for you to forgive anyone who has wronged you?
2. Is it being a "good sport" to ask God to do for you what you are unwilling to do for another?
3. How many of the parables of Jesus deal with this theme?
4. What does forgiveness involve? Does it mean that if one owes you money you should always remit the debt? That, whatever the wrong done you, you should act as if no wrong had been done? Would this be fair to your debtor? Would it help his growth in character? What, then, should be your attitude?
5. How can you learn to forgive, if, deep down in your heart you don't *want* to do it?
6. Study the following great examples of forgiveness and prayers for forgiveness: Joseph, Gen. 45:1-15; Moses, Ex. 32:31-32; Daniel, Dan. 9:3-19; Jesus, Luke 23:34; Stephen, Acts 7:60.

X

THE EVIL

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."—LUKE 11:4.

WHAT a strange thing to pray! *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Can it be that God wants to lead us into temptation and we have to beg Him not to? That is what one would appear to gather from a superficial reading; but clearly that cannot be the real meaning. We must keep in mind, always, our definition of prayer. It is not, and cannot be, trying to make God change His mind, for that Mind is always planning more wonderful things for His children than anything our thought can reach. Prayer—true prayer—always means the opening of the life to an infinitely loving and utterly holy God so that His love and His holiness may fill us, and work through us. The mind of Jesus, being one with His Father's, He could not possibly be telling us to pray for something different from that Father's plan. All the way through He has been teaching us to pray to understand and love and obey that plan.

But all around and in life everywhere, evil is lying in wait. It is not only in places of corruption. There is no place or business or profession in life that has not its own peculiar temptation. There is no amusement, however wholesome in itself, that has not its own secret door to some path of temptation. It may be only the temptation to spend too much of the time which is one of the Father's trusts, upon that particular thing; but whatever it is, that little secret path is always there. In the Middle Ages men tried to escape by burying themselves in monasteries. They never escaped—the little door was there no less than in the world from which they fled. Everywhere the little paths leading down—everywhere the subtle, tempting whispers. So the prayer is that, wherever we go—wherever in business or pleasure or exploration or adventure, we may not feel the pull of the temptation in that particular place—the temptation to lower our standards—to yield to ease —to seek happiness as an end—to put anything in the universe before the Father's honor and the Father's plan.

And note how we are to be saved from the evil. The Greek word carries the meaning of saving by drawing to one's self. God saves us from the contamination of evil by drawing us to Himself, just as a mother, seeing her baby in the path of an automobile, saves him by catching him up in her arms.

We are saved from the evil of any situation by keeping close to the heart of the Father. No contagion can touch us so long as we keep that contact unbroken.

And it is even more than the evil of sin from which the Master tells us to pray to be delivered. The word for evil means literally, that which causes trouble. There are other things besides sin which cause trouble. Ignorance causes terrible trouble. Pain and suffering cause trouble. But none of them can poison the heart that is close against the Father's. Safe in that contact, the child can face any awfulness of evil, sure that underneath his life are the Everlasting Arms.

But there is one thing to be remembered here. No soul can pray that he may not be led into temptation—that he may be preserved from its power—unless he is honestly trying not to put himself or his brother into the way of temptation. He cannot fill his mind and imagination with evil books and pictures and pray this prayer. The soul that has its vision of that burning Holiness will not so hurt the Father. The one who is praying for that Will to be done in his life could not so betray Him.

But, as he realizes more and more the awfulness of the evil from which he is praying that his own soul and his brother's may be delivered, more and

more clearly he will see one Figure down in the dark places where men's souls are ruined; more and more compellingly he will feel the call to go and stand with his Master in that fight.

"'Thou Who art Lord of all the tender pities,
Mercy incarnate, human and divine,
How could we write Thy Name upon these cities
Wherein Thy children live like herded swine?'

"Would not those eyes that saw their angels gazing
Into the brightness of the Father's face
Turn on this slum, with love and fury blazing
Shrivelling our souls with shame of such a place?

"'Where are my children, those the Father gave you?
What have you done with babes that bore My Name?
Was it for this I suffered so to save you?
Must I forever burn for you in shame?'"

Only when our souls are possessed by such divine passion against evil shall we surely be delivered from such evil ourselves; because then, and only then, shall we and our Father be utterly at one.

So, through all the experiences of life the great prayer leads us; and so they all began in the Love in Whom we live and move and have our being. God—*God!*

Questionnaire

1. How do you reconcile this prayer with James 1:13?

2. Think of Peter in the courtyard on the night of Christ's betrayal. God led him there; he was as close to Jesus as he could get. Did God *mean* him to deny his Master? Does God ever lead us into a situation where He *expects* us to sin? Or are we ever compelled by circumstances to sin?

3. Upon the other hand, is there any situation in life that cannot be wrongly used? Is there a possible "other side" even to the finest virtues—love, courage, loyalty, unselfishness? Can every profession or occupation be used in such a way as to lead to sin? Think this over very carefully.

4. As instances of men who used their opportunities for evil rather than good, study Micah 3:9-12; Ezek. 34:1-4; Ex. 32:1-6. What others can you recall? What instances of people put in evil situations through the wrong-doing of others, who yet won good from the evil? See Gen. 45:4-8; Acts 16:16-34.

5. Is there any connection between this prayer and Rom. 8:2?

6. *How can you be sure of getting the good rather than the evil out of every situation?*

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